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SOVIET REACTION TO THE US CIVIL DEFENSE PROGRAM



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SOVIET REACTION TO THE US CIVIL DEFENSE PROGRAM

Since mid-1961, there has been a continuing flow of comment on US civil defense activities in Soviet radiobroadcasts, press releases, and publications, whereas previously Soviet news media had commented only briefly on US civil defense and even then usually at the time of alert exercises. 1/ Moreover, much of this recent Soviet comment has been carried in radiobroadcasts directed to foreign audiences. Several US publications or documents evidently have been exploited in the composition of one of these recent Soviet releases, 2/ indicating that at least overt information on US civil defense is being collected and collated by some agency in the USSR.

The following propaganda lines are discernible in the Soviet comment:

1. The US program is a conditioning of the American public to accept the "inevitability of a nuclear war, which the US militarists are preparing." 3/
2. The US "nuclear hysteria" provides favorable conditions for an increased defense budget. 4/
3. The US civil defense program demonstrates aggressive intent and is a part of "warmongering," whereas the Soviet position is one of peace and disarmament. 5/
4. "Wealthy" Americans build shelters and are prepared to keep out others with firearms if need be. 6/
5. "Monopolies" and industrial corporations seek large profits from the air raid shelters that the American people are being pressured to build on credit. 7/
6. The Soviet nuclear-missile strength has induced fear or panic on the part of the US public. 8/

Some satisfaction, however, has been expressed by the USSR over the appearance of so-called peace demonstrators in the US, active in resisting civil defense activity and in criticizing the shelter program. Most recently a Soviet broadcast commented on the declining sale of air raid shelters to "ordinary" American citizens. 9/

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Coupled with the above propaganda have been insistent statements, usually connected with the US shelter program, that shelters are useless in nuclear war. For example, former Ambassador Menshikov, on two occasions, commented on the futility of shelters, 10/ and Defense Minister Malinovskiy more recently called shelters "coffins and tombs prepared in advance." 11/

A final note is added by Soviet implication or statements that the USSR has no shelter program. For example, a Soviet visitor returning from the US stated in an English broadcast to North America that "at home, none of us had ever heard the sirens of an atom drill or seen fallout shelters." 12/ Even Mrs. Khrushchev told US peace marchers that there was no defense in nuclear war and that "therefore, we are not building air raid shelters. We are not getting ready." 13/

The effects on the Soviet citizenry of this propaganda has not been extensively reported in the US. When queried on this point, one returning US official stated that he did detect some apprehension on the part of Soviet individuals in the latter half of 1961 -- apprehension regarding US civil defense activity and shelter construction.

In summary, the Soviet news media and Soviet officials have expressed definite concern with increased US civil defense activity and the new shelter program. At home and abroad they are identifying the US civil defense effort with increasing military aggressiveness on the part of the US leadership. (Admission of a Soviet shelter construction program -- which actually had begun by 1950 -- thus would imply a similar and earlier aggressive intention on their part.)

The insistence that shelters are useless in nuclear war appears to be tailored largely for foreign, not Soviet, consumption and thus may reflect an attempt to influence adversely US public support for President Kennedy's program. Obviously the USSR would prefer an indecisive or ineffective US civil defense program, for such a deficiency would affect US bargaining positions and strategic decisions and, in some measure, would reduce the possibility of a US attack on the USSR.

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Analyst:

Coord:

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